Refuting Error

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THE BIBLE VERSUS SOUL SLEEP
(and Annihilationism & Universalism)

By Edward E. Stevens (Dec. 7, 2005)

I found this article on the Internet (did a Google search for “soul sleep”). I made major modifications to it and added a lot more material to better reflect a preterist perspective on all these texts.

Most of the comments here are mine, but a few of Valentim’s comments were left unchanged. The link to the original article written by Antoine Valentim is no longer working. Recently I did another search for his article on Google, but could not find it. So it must have been taken off the Internet after I originally accessed it.

SOUL SLEEP is the idea that when all people (both righteous and unrighteous) died back in the days before Christ, both their souls and bodies “died,” meaning that even their soul/spirit became unconscious until the resurrection. The Seventh Day Adventists go even further to assert that the soul/spirit is nonexistent during that time between death and the resurrection event. Furthermore, if they are unsaved, they cannot have consciousness restored to them, since they believe that “consciousness of the soul” is immortality, and only the righteous (saved ones) get immortality. So, to be consistent, the Soul Sleep doctrine forces one to the Annihilationist viewpoint. It all starts with the definitions of “immortality” and “life” and “death” and “destroy” and “perish.” Below are some passages which show clearly that the souls/spirits of the dead in the days BEFORE and AFTER Christ’s resurrection were “conscious” or “alive” in the unseen spiritual realm.

In the Old Testament, we could mention Enoch “walking with God and was no more [upon the earth].” Enoch did not die young just to go into unconsciousness. He went into the spiritual realm with God in a conscious state. The necromancer

at Endor was commanded by King Saul to conjure up the soul/spirit of Samuel, which she did. Samuel was conscious and aware of what had been happening in the world, as well as what would happen the next day. The passage of time was still a conscious thing to Samuel. Elijah was caught up by fiery angelic chariots into the spiritual realm, and he was conscious there. We see him reappear with Moses to Christ at the Transfiguration. Both Moses (who had died) and Elijah are obviously VERY conscious of what had happened with Christ up to that point, as well as what was about to happen to Jesus shortly in Jerusalem (His "departure" or death). In Rev. 6 it mentions the "souls" under the altar crying out "How Long?" These were obviously dead folks who had been martyred, yet their souls were VERY conscious apart from their bodies, and this was BEFORE the resurrection. Paul says in Philippians 1:23 that if he was killed in the persecution that he would "depart and be with Christ, for that is VERY much better." That doesn't sound like a description of "soul sleep" to me. And keep in mind that this was BEFORE the resurrection. Also, in 2 Cor. 12 Paul talks about his being "caught up" into the "third heaven" (paradise) and hearing "inexpressible words" there. He wasn't sure whether that was an "in the body" or "out of the body" experience. But if "soul sleep" is true, then it could not have been an "out of the body" experience, and the inspired Apostle Paul would have to be considered mistaken for even suggesting that it could have been "out of the body" in the first place. He should have known the true nature of the afterlife, especially since he had been taken there "in the body." His ambiguity here about a POSSIBLE "out of the body" experience in Paradise (the third heaven) does not bode well for the "soul sleep" advocates. If it was not a POSSIBLE way of experiencing Paradise, then Paul would not even suggested it. It seems clear that he is teaching the same thing Jesus did about the unseen spiritual realm which can be consciously experienced "out of the body."

Look at these other texts which not only imply the consciousness of the soul/spirit after death, but actually assert it and demand it.

Genesis 35:18
And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died)…
Note that, when Rachel died, her soul departed. It didn't "fall asleep".

Luke 12:4
And I say unto you my friends, "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do."
Here we see that Jesus says that murderers kill only the body, and cannot harm the soul at all. In other words, our soul stays alive, despite anything a murderer might try to do. Notice that Jesus speaks of the "soul" and "body" separately.

Matthew 17:1,3-4

And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and brought them up into a high mountain apart, and, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here: if You wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elias."

Moses had died, (*Deuteronomy 34:5* – So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord) and yet, despite being dead, he is able to speak to Jesus at the Transfiguration. Doesn't sound like his disembodied soul/spirit was "unconscious" or "out of existence" to me. Keep in mind that this was BEFORE the resurrection. Moses and Elijah did not have their "immortal" bodies yet. But their disembodied souls/spirits were still conscious of what was happening to Jesus.

Luke 16:19-31

There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame." But Abraham said, "Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and you art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence." Then he said, "I pray thee therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment." Abraham said unto him, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." And he said, "Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent." And he said unto him, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

Annihilationists and "soul-sleep" advocates will try to dismiss this verse by claiming it is a parable. But even if it is a parable, it still doesn't remove the

problem. Jesus in all of his parables and discourses teaches nothing that is not "true to life." His parables do not distort reality, nor paint pictures that are not realistic and possible. If the picture Jesus paints of Hades is not correct, then we would have to charge Jesus with misrepresenting reality. That is the net effect of the Annihilationist rejection of the picture of Hades found in Luke 16. Notice that Lazarus and the rich man have both died, but their souls are still conscious in Hades, despite the death of their bodies (and the same is true of Abraham). All this takes place before the resurrection, while the rich man's brothers are still alive on earth. If this was not the real state of the dead in Hades, then Jesus is knowingly guilty of totally misrepresenting the nature of the unseen Hadean spiritual realm to his disciples. It is obvious that Luke is not aware of this "alleged" misrepresentation, because he doesn't correct it and set the record straight. There are no disclaimers here. Nowhere in the New Testament do any of the inspired writers correct this impression that Jesus gives of the Hadean realm, but in fact they further augment it and reinforce it, as we shall see below.

Luke 20:34-38

Jesus said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; for they cannot even die anymore, because they are like angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. "But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the*passage about the burning* bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. "Now He is not the God of the dead but of the LIVING; for ALL LIVE TO HIM."

Jesus is speaking to the Sadducees here about their "test case" on the afterlife and the resurrection. The Sadducees were Annihilationists. They denied an afterlife even for the righteous, and they certainly denied that the souls/spirits of dead people were still conscious after the death of their bodies. Yet, notice what Jesus says about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and all the dead here in this discourse to the Sadducees. Notice that the dead are still "alive" (i.e., conscious) in the unseen spiritual realm (Hades). They were not annihilated or unconscious like the Sadducees believed. If Jesus actually believed in "soul sleep" like the Sadducees did, why doesn't he agree with the Sadducees that the departed dead ARE unconscious or nonexistent until the resurrection? Jesus doesn't leave a square inch of turf for the Sadducees to stand on. He totally repudiates their claim that the dead are unconscious and nonexistent and never to be raised. He instead asserts clearly that "ALL" the dead (including Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the

deceased woman and her seven deceased husbands) “ARE ALIVE TO HIM.” They are conscious and have not ceased to exist. They will remain consciously alive right on through the resurrection event. This was the perfect opportunity for Jesus to set the record straight on the consciousness of the soul after death, and Jesus clearly comes down on the side AGAINST the Sadducees who believed in “soul sleep” and “annihilationism.”

Luke 23:43 (the penitent thief)
And Jesus said unto him, “Verily I say unto you, Today you shall be with me in paradise.”
That day (“today”) was before the resurrection. And it clearly implies that the thief would consciously know and experience “paradise” with Christ on that very day (after their bodies expired). They both (Jesus and the penitent thief) went to the “good” part of Hades called “paradise” or “Abraham’s bosom,” where Abraham and Lazarus were also (cf. Luke 16:19ff).

1 Peter 3:18-19 and 1 Pet. 4:6 (bracketed info and emphasis mine, ees)
For Christ also has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which also he went and PREACHED UNTO THE SPIRITS imprisoned [in Hades]. …For the gospel has for this purpose been PREACHED EVEN TO THOSE WHO ARE DEAD [in Hades], that though they [have suffered death] in the flesh as [all] men [have to do], they may live in the spirit according to the will of God.
If the spirits imprisoned in Hades were unconscious and “knew nothing,” then why did Jesus bother to go and preach to them? And further, how could Jesus Himself, whose body was dead, be conscious after death and preach to anybody? Are we to assume that Christ was unconscious (or out of existence) during that three days his body was in the tomb? If so, that would reflect adversely on the Deity of Christ, and it would make this text totally incomprehensible. The obvious meaning that flies off the face of this text is that when Jesus’ body died, His conscious Spirit/Soul descended into the Hadean realm (cf. Eph. 4:9-10 and Acts 2:27,31) where He not only announced the good news of His soon-coming redemption of the righteous from Satan’s captivity in the good part of Hades (Paradise), but also the soon-coming doom of the unrighteous in the other part of Hades (Tartarus). It does not pose any difficulties for the preterist view at all to suggest this as the correct interpretation of both 1 Pet. 3:18-19 and 1 Pet. 4:6. And in fact, it finally solves all the difficulties that Christians have always struggled with. The Preterist view shows that the Roman Catholic interpretation of this text (as a prooftext for

Purgatory and the “second chance” idea) is totally bogus. The wicked in the bad part of Hades (Tartarus) are not given a second chance. They are merely told of their soon coming doom, when at the resurrection of the rest of the righteous dead out of the good part of Hades, the wicked will be cast into the Lake of Fire (Gehinnom) for eternal conscious punishment “outside” of heaven (cf. Rev. 22:14-15).

Luke 24:37-39

But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, “Why are you troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see me have.”

If a spirit apart from its body is dead, then surely the Apostles would know this and thus would not have thought that a living Jesus would be a spirit. Also, if the Apostles had been incorrect in believing that a person’s soul survives apart from that person’s body, then why didn’t Jesus correct them instead of encouraging them in this “erroneous” belief they held? In fact, Jesus here says that the spirit exists independently of the body.

2 Corinthians 5:6,8-9

Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord…. We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.

This passage reflects the status that Paul and other believers had during the transition period (between the Cross and the Parousia) before the final resurrection event in AD 70. Paul says that if he died (became “absent from his body”) he knew he would be “at home with the Lord.” And conversely, if he was still alive in his body here on earth, he was “absent from the Lord” who was away in heaven and due to return soon. If the “soul sleep” idea is correct, these words of Paul become deeply enigmatic. How could Paul “be at home with the Lord” in any real or conscious sense if his soul/spirit became unconscious/non-existant at the death of his body? Yet, Paul affirms very clearly here that he knows that if he had died in that transition period before the resurrection event, he would have been “at home with the Lord” and “absent from his body”! Paul obviously did not hold to a “soul sleep” concept!

Revelation 20:4

I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus… they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.
Note that John saw only the *souls* of the martyrs. This was the "first resurrection" group who were raised at the beginning of the millennium period. It was obviously martyrs whose bodies were dead, but whose "souls" were conscious and were allowed to "come to life" (be taken out of their captivity in Hades) and reign with Christ during the millennium period. It doesn't say whether they were given their new immortal bodies yet or not. But it does call this the "first resurrection." It was the first group of disembodied souls who were raised out of Hades. I believe Matt. 27:52-53 is the event that this text is pointing to — that group of "saints" who came out of their tombs at Jesus' resurrection and "appeared to many" in Jerusalem. Apparently they ascended with Christ 40 days later (Eph. 4:8-10) and may in fact be the "souls under the altar" mentioned in Rev. 6:9-10. The point we are making here is that these "souls" had consciousness BEFORE the final resurrection in AD 70. If they didn't get their new immortal bodies until AD 70, then they were disembodied "souls" that were still conscious. This refutes the "soul sleep" idea that disembodied souls are unconscious or nonexistent.

Revelation 6:9-10
When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the SOULS of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; and they CRIED OUT with a LOUD VOICE, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"
Here we see disembodied "SOULS" in the heavenly temple (under the altar) BEFORE the final resurrection and judgment, while life is still going on as usual on the earth. These martyrs, whose bodies were clearly "dead," have their own memories, and remember that they have been martyred, and are crying out for justice against their murderers. They are very obviously "conscious" without their bodies in the heavenly realm before the final resurrection when they would have received their new immortal bodies. If the soul sleep idea is correct, this passage would be totally inexplicable, hopelessly cryptic, and a blatant misrepresentation of reality in the unseen spiritual realm.

Rev. 22:14-15
Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may ENTER by the gates into the city. OUTSIDE ARE the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.

This is “THE” KILLER TEXT for not only the “soul sleep” doctrine, but Annihilationism and Universalism as well. Notice that this text is talking about the state of the dead AFTER the final (AD 70) resurrection has taken place. The righteous have their new immortal bodies and are INSIDE the heavenly city. The unsaved are still conscious and are OUTSIDE the gates of the heavenly city. The unsaved did not get “immortality” at the resurrection event, yet they are still conscious, so this necessarily implies that “immortality” is not the same thing as “consciousness of the soul.” These unsaved folks are still conscious after the resurrection, even though their bodies have died and they did not receive “immortality” at the resurrection. They remain consciously OUTSIDE of heaven forever after the resurrection event. This not only refutes the “soul sleep” idea, but shows that the wicked do not cease to exist (Annihilationism), nor are they given a “second chance” to repent and accept Christ and “ENTER” into heaven (Universalism).

Is Universalism Biblical?

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What is Universalism? Here’s ***Webster’s*** definition: **universalism** *n* (1805) **1** *often capitalized* **a:** a theological doctrine that all human beings will eventually be saved **b:**the principles and practices of a liberal Christian denomination founded in the 18th century originally to uphold belief in universal salvation and now united with Unitarianism **2:** something that is universal in scope **3:** the state of being universal.

Universalism is, obviously, a very old chestnut and until recently a dead issue as far as Bible believing Christians were concerned. This changed with the modern Preterist movement; the old chestnut of Universalism is back with a new vigor. Those preterists that proclaim it have universal salvation in mind—there are no lost souls, everyone finds salvation, eventually.

If you think the teaching of universal salvation is contrary to the teaching of the Bible, you are absolutely correct. Frankly, several other false doctrines combine with Universalism to pave the way that goes astray. They are Heaven Now (on this earth), Annihilationism (no eternal, conscious punishment) and Open Theism (making God in man’s image). Sadly, many subscribe to these erroneous teachings.

A word before we proceed: Preterism (Jesus returned in the first century) is of God. Many are now free from the shackles of false futurism (Jesus has not yet returned, but will in the future).

Christians now realize that both comings of Jesus Christ took place in the same generation. They can see this truth in the Scriptures. The modern preterist movement is of God. Not since the days of Martin Luther have we seen such a turning back of spiritual darkness. It is a time of awakening.

With every great move of God there is a contrary movement. It is spiritual warfare. As long as this earth remains there will be spiritual battles. “For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.” The “heaven now” people would deny this, but it is nevertheless so.

The false doctrines that now pervade Preterism are attacks to nullify the truth about the Second Coming of Christ and the resurrection in the first century. Preterism has an enormous job in pushing back the darkness of entrenched futurism; it’s an uphill struggle, but it will succeed because it is of God. How to stop it? Let’s flood it with a lot of kooky, unbiblical teachings. People will then throw up their hands and run away from the truth of Preterism. Universalism, Annihilationism, Heaven Now, and Open Theism are attempts to accomplish that goal. These are attacks against preterist truth and the integrity of the word of God.

We’re dealing with two types of people when we consider the adherents to these diabolical doctrines: **1.** Real Christians who are babes, immature, or generally not Christ-centered in their understanding of the Bible. **2.** Wolves (unconverted religionists) in sheep’s clothing who desire to eat up the true sheep and scatter the rest of the flock. “For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.” (Acts 20:29-30) A wolf in sheep’s clothing is not a recent idea.

The power for salvation always comes from God. He *alone* is able. Consider these verses. “He (Jesus Christ) came unto His own, and His own received him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” (John 1:11-13) Notice, please, that the power to become the sons of God (salvation) was to those that *received Him*.

Notice, also, that man cannot bring salvation to anyone, including himself, for it’s

not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. Who can receive salvation without God? No one!

The only verse one really needs to refute Universalism is John 3:16. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” This verse is telling us the same truth we saw in the first chapter of John. Here it uses the words *believesin Him* rather than*received Him,* but it is the same truth.

Our New Testament is replete with examples, but let this account with the Philippian jailer be adequate. “And he brought them out and said, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ So they said, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.’” (Acts 16:30-31) What do we understand from these examples? Clearly, believing in Jesus Christ is necessary for our salvation.

The Universalist loves to use verses that *appear* to prove his point. Here’s an example: “And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.” (1 John 2:2) Jesus was, indeed, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29), but that does not mean everyone receives Him or believes in Him. Hebrews states it most clearly. “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” (Hebrews 11:6) What is that reward? It is God Himself and eternal life in Him.

Jesus Christ is in the exact center of all God does, yesterday, today, and forever. Universalism removes Jesus Christ from the center and relegates Him to the sidelines. What Jesus did in the past was absolutely necessary, says the Universalist, but that is all finished now. We don’t need Jesus anymore. Salvation is now automatic for everyone. Men don’t have to believe in Jesus. They don’t have to love Him. They don’t even have to like Him. Everyone receives salvation, even Judas Iscariot, according to Universalism.

Hint—whenever Jesus Christ is not the centerpiece of a particular teaching, that teaching is not of God.

Under the doctrine of Universalism, the Gospel becomes an old-fashioned, outdated message. It was necessary for the first century, of course, but not for today. The all-inclusive work of Jesus Christ saves all of humanity forever. Who needs Jesus or the Gospel? All mankind reaps eternal life automatically. Why bother preaching the Gospel when all men become God’s children regardless of

what they believe? (This contradicts the Bible that calls the Good News the ***everlasting Gospel*** in Revelation 14:6.)

Why, you may ask, has the old unbiblical teaching of Universalism reared its ugly head within the framework of the modern preterist movement? That's a great question, because it reveals a "blind spot" in Preterism to which many subscribe. The first century saints, and many generations of saints since the first century, are in God's living presence in glory. For them, death is swallowed up in victory, they see God face to face, they are made perfect, and God is all in all. That is, *all* in them is of God—not as in this earth where the believer's flesh contends against the Spirit of God.

All preterists know these truths. The "blind spot" occurs when we observe the perfected generation(s) in glory and then claim that same perfection to a generation still in their earthen vessels—us! This leads to "heaven now" and other bad teachings such as *Universalism*. They fail to see that each generation must be born again of incorruptible seed (1 Pet. 1:23) and grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. What is true for past saints in glory cannot apply en masse to the rest of humanity. The perfect has come for the glorified saints; we, however, still bear the treasure in our imperfect, earthen vessels. Glory is our destiny, but not yet our experience.

Universalism is unbiblical. It leaves the way of truth and places Jesus Christ on the periphery of God's plan of redemption. It declares repentance out of date, the born-again experience unnecessary, and accuses those who criticize Universalism as not understanding the fullness of God's "grace." God's true grace is in His Son, Jesus Christ. He saves you as an individual. Salvation is an intimate, personal experience with the Lord. It is *not* an impersonal, *universal* principle for all mankind.

One last thought in closing. In the world today many saints witness for Jesus Christ at the risk of their freedom, their well being, and their very lives. One organization that reports on these activities is *The Voice of the Martyrs.*

These faithful saints live in repressive regimes. The powers that be hate the Gospel and the name of Jesus Christ. It takes great courage and Holy Spirit power to enable these children of God to preach and teach the hope of salvation in Christ.

Many go to prison. Many suffer disfigurement, and many die. They think it is worth it for the privilege of telling the lost about Jesus Christ and His salvation. They

believe God enables them to infiltrate the darkness. We believe He does, too.

One wonders what these courageous saints would say to the teachers of the false doctrine of Universalism?

Dear Muslim Reader – Who Do You Say I Am?

by Eric L. Knick, BACC

*… He [Jesus] asked His disciples, saying to them, "Who do men say that I am?" So they answered, "John the Baptist: but others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets." He [Jesus] said to them, "But who do **you** say that I am?"* Mark 8:28-29 (NKJV)

Dear Muslim reader, suppose this question was presented to you, how would you have answered Jesus? Would you have said to him that he was just a prophet? If he was just a mere prophet as many Muslims believe, then would you say that he was a true prophet or a false prophet? If your answer is that he was a true prophet, then why does Islam through their teachings say that he was a false prophet? Now you may be scratching your head and asking this writer, "In what area does Islam teach this?" Correct me if I'm wrong, but doesn't Islam hold the notion that Jesus didn't die on the cross, and teach that it was Judas Iscariot who died in his place? The Quran even makes this allegation in surah 4:157-158, which reads, "they slew him not nor crucified, but it appeared so unto them … they slew him not for certain. But Allah took him up unto himself." (*M. Pickthall Translation*) This surah however seems contradictory when compared to surah 19:33, for at the time of Jesus' infancy, he supposedly said, "Peace on the day I was born and the day I die, and the day I shall be raised." (*M. Pickthall Translation*) Did Jesus die or did he not? For you, Muslim reader, to answer either yeah or nay places you in quite a dilemma. How so? If you deny that Jesus died on the cross then you are calling him a false prophet. If you say that he did die on the cross then you are at odds with your Islamic teaching. It is quite a predicament to be in. So where do **you** stand? Who do you say that Jesus is-a false prophet or the true Messiah? To hold to your Islamic doctrine that teaches that Jesus did not die on the cross is to reject both Old and New Testament scriptures. There is no middle ground, my friend.

Within the Old Testament, from Genesis to Malachi, God foretold through His holy prophets that the Messiah would come. Through the prophet Isaiah, God called the Messiah "His suffering servant."(Isaiah 52:13-14 & Isaiah 53:1-12) From the New

Testament Jesus clearly stated throughout his three and a half years ministry that He, not Judas Iscariot, would “be betrayed, put to death, and raised in three days.” Consider the following New Testament passages: (NKJV)

Matthew 17:22-23 says, now while they came together in Galilee, He [Jesus] said to them, “The Son of Man [Jesus] is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised to life. ”

Matthew 20:17-19 says, now as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, He took the twelve disciples aside and said to them, “We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of man [Jesus] will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked, and flogged, and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life.” (For the fulfillment of Jesus’ words, please read Matthew 26:47-68 and Matthew Chapter 27.)

Matthew 26:2 says, ” … and the Son of man [Jesus] will be handed over to be crucified.” (See also: Mark 9:31, 10:33-34, Luke 18:35, Luke 24:6-8, John 12:32-33, and Luke 18:31-32)

Jesus faithfully taught his disciples that He must suffer many things, be rejected by the religious rulers, and that after three days he would rise again (Mark 8:31). John the Baptist was baptizing in the river Jordan, when he looked up one day and saw Jesus coming toward him. He declared: “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!”(John 1:29) Through His death on the cross, Christ fulfilled every Old Testament type of the justice for mankind’s sin required by a holy God. Jesus Christ became the spotless Lamb of God. A blood sacrifice was required to atone for sin. And the book of Hebrews tells us that the blood of bulls and goats was not enough to provide a complete remedy for sin (Hebrews 9:13-14). That would require the death of the sinless Son of God.

For those of you who question the New Testament’s validity, I pose the following questions to you:

How did you gain the story of Judas Iscariot betraying Jesus, as your Quran says nothing about this?

You believe that Jesus was the Messiah and you expect him to return one day, yet you reject his words. How then can you say that he was the true Messiah?

How can you explain away the Old Testament prophecies, the New Testament

predictions, and the historical accounts?

Why do you pick and choose what you wish to believe from the New Testament? If it has been tampered with as many Muslims claim, then all of it is false.

Now I ask you, who do **you** say that Jesus was — a true Messiah who said that he would be crucified, or a false Messiah? He cannot be the true Messiah if what he said was untrue. If he was the true Messiah, which this writer believes to be so, then what Islam is teaching is false and what you believe is in error. We, the Christians, have three witnesses: The Old Testament, the New Testament, and the historical confirmation of Jesus being on the cross. According to both Testaments, "every word must be established by two or three witnesses. " What witnesses do you have? So Muslim reader the question remains, who do you say that Jesus was? Just a mere prophet? I assure you, Jesus was no mere prophet – He did not merely speak for the LORD; He spoke **as** the LORD. Do not allow anyone to distort your understanding, as where you spend eternity rests on who **you** believe that Jesus Christ is.

Salvation is not something you can earn by performing your prayers, your fasting, or whatever else your scholars tell you. Jesus said **He** "was the way, the truth and the life, and that no one comes to the Father but through him" (John 14:6). Our humanistic culture declares; "There are many ways to God. It is not important to what you believe or in whom, but only that you believe." To that errant philosophy scripture responds powerfully, declaring redemption through Christ alone: "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. II (Acts 4:12) Contrary to what others may say, true salvation comes **only** through Jesus Christ and what he did on the cross. My prayers are for you to surrender your heart to Jesus, making him LORD of your life, and living for him in freedom and not in bondage to religion. There is a big difference.

Christian scholar Hank Hanegraaff has this to say: "Religion is man's attempt to reach up and become acceptable to God through his/her own goodness-by living a good life, obeying the Ten Commandments, or following the Golden Rule. Some religions even teach that this cannot be accomplished in one lifetime, so we have to live many lives until we are finally good enough. In the Old Testament Isaiah said, "But we are all like an unclean thing, and our righteousnesses are like filthy rags;" (Isaiah 64:6). The problem with religion's answer is we must be absolutely perfect if we are ever to become acceptable to God. The Bible declares, "You shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect' (Matthew 5:48). The problem is

no one is perfect, and no matter what life one lives, we will never be perfect. If we are ever going to know God now and live with Him in heaven forever, there has to be another way. That way is found in a relationship. Relationship is what the Christian faith is all about. It is not a set of do's and don'ts. It is not about how one drinks, or eats, or how they dress. It is a personal relationship with our Creator that does not depend on our ability to reach up and touch him through our own good works, but rather on His willingness to reach down and touch us through His love. The Bible says, "The Word [Jesus] became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). What this means is that God came into time and space to restore relationships broken by sin. Sin is not just murder, rape, or robbery. Sin is failing to do the things we should and doing the things we should not. Sin is anything short of perfection. Our sin is the barrier between us and a satisfying relationship with God. The Bible says, "Your iniquities [sins] have separated you from God" (Isaiah 59:2).

Just as light and dark cannot exist together, God and sin cannot coexist. Each day we are separated further from God because each day we add to the account of our sin. Sin not only separates us from God, but it also separates us from others. You only need to read the newspapers or listen to the daily news to see how true this really is. Locally, we read of murder, robbery, rape, and fraud. Nationally, we hear of corruption in politics, racial tension, and an escalating rate of suicide. Internationally, there is apartheid, genocide, and war. We live in a time when terrorism abounds and when our world can be destroyed by nuclear aggression. All of this points to sin. The Bible says, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). There are no exceptions!

We all have had earthly fathers, but no matter how good, or bad as the case may be, none are perfect. God, however, is perfect, and as the perfect Father, He wants to have an intimate, personal relationship with us. In the book of Jeremiah, God says, "I have loved you with an everlasting love" (31:3). Think about this for a moment. God loves us so much He wants to have a relationship with us regardless of our sin. God, however, is also the perfect Judge, who is absolutely just, righteous, and holy. The prophet Habakkuk said of God, "You are purer of eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness" (1:13). Therein lies the dilemma. On one hand, God is the perfect Father; He loves us and desires a personal relationship. On the other hand, He is the perfect Judge, who by nature cannot tolerate our sin. The satisfaction of God's love and justice is ultimately found in Jesus Christ who came to earth to be our Savior and Lord. As Savior, Jesus lived the perfect life we could never live. The Bible says, "He [God] made Him

[Jesus] who knew no sin to be sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God with Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). This is the great exchange which the entire Bible was written about! God took our sins and placed them all on Jesus Christ. He suffered and died to pay the debt we could not pay, and offers us His perfection as an absolutely **free** gift. We cannot earn it or deserve it; we can only live a life of gratitude for the free gift of a King. Jesus not only died to be our Savior, He lives to be our Lord. As Lord, Jesus gives our lives meaning, purpose, and fulfillment. It is incredible to think that the One who spoke and the galaxies leaped into fulfillment loves us and wants us to have a satisfying life here and now, and an eternity of joy with Him in heaven. When the jailer asked Paul and Silas, "What must I do to be saved?" they answered, "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved' (Acts 16:30-31). As Paul explains, "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved' (Romans 10:9). Nothing less than this is pleasing to God. Through the undeniable fact of His resurrection, Jesus demonstrated that He is both Savior and Lord. However to make him your Savior and your Lord, you need to take two steps: repent and receive.

Repentance is an old English word that describes a willingness to turn from our sin towards Jesus Christ. It literally means a complete V-turn on the road of life, a change of heart and a change of mind. It means that you are willing to follow Jesus and to receive Him as Savior and Lord of your life. Jesus Himself said, "Repent, and believe in the gospel' (Mark 1:15). To demonstrate that you truly believe means to receive God's free gift by trusting in and depending on Jesus alone as Lord of your life here and your Savior for all eternity. It takes more than knowledge. The demons know about Jesus and tremble. It takes more than agreement that the knowledge we have is true. The demons also agree that Jesus is Lord. What it takes is to trust in Christ alone for eternal life. If you are sick, you can believe a particular medicine can cure you. You can even agree that it has cured thousands before you. But until you receive it my friend, it will not cure you. Likewise, you can know about Jesus, and say that He is just a prophet, but until you receive Him as your Savior and Lord, you will not be saved and you will not be with Him in paradise. *Remember, salvation is not based on what you do, but on what Christ has done. He wants to take your sin and give you His perfection.*

Dear Muslim reader, Jesus is knocking on the door of your heart, and asking, "Are you ready now to receive me as Savior and Lord?" If your answer is yes, you have made the most important decision of your life! By it you are saying I **realize** that I am a sinner; I **repent** of my sins; and I **receive** Jesus as my Savior and Lord." If

this is the sincere desire of your heart, simply repeat the following prayer or say one in your own words:

“Heavenly Father, I thank you that you have provided a way for me to have a relationship with you; I realize that I am a sinner, and I thank you that you are my perfect Father. I ask you, Jesus, to be my Savior and Lord. I repent and receive your perfection in exchange for my sins. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

Based on God’s promise you **now** have eternal life-you have crossed over from death to life. According to Jesus Christ, those who repent and receive Him as Savior and Lord are “born again” (John 3:3)-not physically, but spiritually. Find yourself a local Bible believing Church and be sure to ask any questions that come to your mind. This writer hopes to see you in heaven one day.

Excerpt taken from: *The NKJV Legacy Study Bible*. Excerpt written by Hank Hanegraaff of the Christian Research Institute.

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